



REMARKS

Upon entry of the amendments, claims 1-4, 6, 7, and 9 will be pending in the application.

Applicants provide the following comments to the Office Action.

Specification

Applicants have amended the specification as requested by the Examiner.

Amendment of the Drawings

Applicants have amended Fig. 8 to include the label - -Prior Art- -.

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Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-4, 6, and 7 are rejected for being indefinite.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to clarify that the unprocessed object is taken out of the processed-object carrier and the processed object is transferred to the processed object carrier.

The following comments are provided to the 112 rejections set forth in the Office Action.

Regarding paragraph 3a of the Office Action, Applicants respectfully submit that the preamble is sufficiently descriptive to understand the invention.

Regarding paragraph 3b of the Office Action, claim 1 recites that the “processed-object carrier” is provided on the top face of a “load port unit”. Thus, claim 1 does not

set forth that the port is located on the top surface which appears to be the interpretation raised in the rejection.

Regarding paragraph 3c, the mounting in “vertical directions” is respectfully submitted to be in conformance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, because one of ordinary skill in the art would understand the parameters set forth by the noted language in claim 1, which language references a vertically oriented linear motor. Reference is also made to the example of a vertically oriented linear motor shown in Figures 1 and 3.

Regarding paragraph 3d, Applicants have amended claim 4 to replace “absorbed by” with - - subject to - -.

Applicants respectfully request that the 112 rejections be withdrawn. No new matter is considered to have been introduced in the foregoing claim amendments.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3 and 7 are rejected as being anticipated by WO 98/19333 (“WO ‘333). Applicants have carefully considered the rejection and request that it be withdrawn.

WO ‘333 corresponds to the prior art shown in Fig. 8 of the present application. As shown in Fig. 3 of WO ‘333, the linear motor 45 is supported on the base of the apparatus with parallel linear rails 44 being provided along the base of the apparatus.

Applicants respectfully submit that WO’333 fails to disclose the following feature of claim 1:

“said load port unit is mounted on the outside of a front wall of said system body, said linear motor is mounted in vertical directions inside of said front wall of said system body”,

In the present invention, the load port unit is mounted on the outside of a front wall of said system body and said linear motor is mounted in vertical directions inside of said front wall of said system body. Namely, since both the load port unit and linear motor are mounted on the system body as a common standard positioning member, the distance between the processed-object transfer robot provided on the linear motor and the processed-object carrier decreases (and the error in setting the above distance can be reduced), and the number of members provided between the wafer carrier and the processed-object transfer robot decreases, so that the processed-object transfer robot can precisely position the object in the processed-object carrier, as described in page 4, line 20 to page 5, line 2.

The apparatus of WO '333 would have problems such as described on page 2, lines 21-23 of the present application, i.e., "production errors in the members accumulate, so that there is a problem in that the wafer transfer robot R can not precisely position the wafers in the wafer carrier C".

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are not anticipated by WO '333 because all of the features are not inherently or explicitly disclosed by the cited prior art.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action sets forth the following obviousness rejections:

- (1) Claims 1-3 and 7 rejected as obvious in view of Akimoto (US 5,884,662);
- (2) Claims 4 and 6 rejected as obvious in view of WO '333 and Ito (US 5,950,773; and

(3) Claims 4 and 6 rejected as obvious in view of Akimoto and Ito.

Applicants respectfully submit that Akimoto is also similar to the prior art shown in Fig. 8 of the present application because of the location of the rails (11, 31, 51).

Hence, Akimoto fails to disclose “said load port unit is mounted on the outside of a front wall of said system body, said linear motor is mounted in vertical directions inside of said front wall of said system body”.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 1-3 and 7 should be withdrawn. Further, the rejection of claims 4 and 6 based upon WO ‘333 and Ito should be withdrawn because consideration of the secondary references fails to cure the deficiencies of WO ‘333 in regards of independent claim 1. Likewise, the rejection of claims 4 and 6 based upon Akimoto and Ito should be withdrawn because Ito does not alleviate the aforementioned failings of Akimoto.

New Claim

Applicants respectfully submit that new independent claim 9 is allowable in view of the cited prior art, which fails to disclose that the “linear motor is supported by said first wall within the system body, and wherein said linear motor comprises a primary side and a secondary side with vertically oriented opposing faces”. The prior art of record, which generally depicts a linear motor supported by a base of a system body with its primary side and secondary side having horizontally oriented opposing faces, fails to disclose or suggest the new claim 9 arrangement.

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully assert that the application should be allowed. If any additional fees are due in connection with the filing of this response, such as fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17, please charge the fees to Deposit Account No. 02-4300. Any overpayment can be credited to Deposit Account No. 02-4300.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: November 14, 2003 Signature:



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